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CASE STUDIES

Financial Brokerage Speeds New Account Applications with Distributed Document Capture

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"Now that remote document capture has been installed in some of our branches, I'm already getting calls from our other offices demanding we install it," says Janie Bookout, a partner at J.C. Bradford & Company, a full-service financial brokerage with nearly 100 offices nationwide. She's talking about **Ascent Capture** Internet Server from Kofax, recently installed at dozens of Bradford sites around the country.

"Usually we can't get our offices interested in new technology, she says" Which begs the question: What makes Ascent Capture Internet Server different?

The Problem

The answer is as old as the company - or at least the 15 years that Bookout has been there. "We lose stuff," she says. Bradford's branch offices generate new accounts and they must complete at least five documents per new account. Legal documents required for the SEC, the stock exchanges and for Bradford's own customer files. The offices generate 350 to 400 new account files per day. That translates to over 10,000 pages per day created at dozens of remote locations.

Previously, these documents traveled by interoffice envelope to the headquarters mailroom in Nashville. From there, they entered the new account workflow that passed through several departments.

Somewhere between the branch office employee who sent the forms and the departments in Nashville that processed them, some were lost. This forced branches and prospective customers to recreate these forms.

Lost documents can mean lost business for the branch that sold the account. It can also mean regulatory trouble when a stock exchange or the SEC makes one of their frequent, random compliance checks. Those agencies demand to see the chosen account's documents.

Since the system provided no method for tracing lost documents, there was no sure way to find them or even determine where the problem occurred. Bradford considered faxing documents to

headquarters rather than mailing them.

But they calculated it would be so time consuming that the company would need to add full-time staff at each branch devoted entirely to faxing. Even if feasible, that would only get documents to the mailroom. Many documents are lost from this point forward. And the quality would be too low for electronic capture of those images.

The company already had several years of document imaging experience. They knew that remote capture and electronic workflow were the answers, but until recently no one offered a such a product - let alone an application that could remotely capture and synchronize streams of documents from dozens of sites daily.

Setting up and operating a document scanner was another roadblock. Unless the solution allowed each local JC Bradford team to scan a variety of documents without frequent, time consuming scanner readjustments and document rescans - a process that has historically plagued electronic document capture - distributed capture still wouldn't make sense. For Bradford and most other small remote office environments, the scanner operator must simply be able to load the paper feeder and push the scan button.

The Solution

When Ascent Capture Internet Server was released, a practical Internet capture solution was finally possible. Ascent Capture Internet Server is an optional enhancement to Ascent Capture 3 - the best selling document and data capture product in the world. It remotely captures documents over any type of Internet connection - from dedicated, high-speed lines to the least expensive dial-up connection.

Final Piece Of The Puzzle

Now J.C. Bradford needed technology smart enough to deliver perfect images to Nashville - without requiring each branch to hire a full-time electronic document capture specialist.

Another product from Kofax, called VirtualReScan (VRS), solved the scanning issues. VirtualReScan is an intelligent hardware and software package that produces acceptable document images on the first scan. It adjusts scanner settings as needed while the scanner runs. Scanner operators may simply load documents and scan - even mixed paper types and sizes - without rescanning.

"VRS gives us trouble-free operation for our inexperienced remote scan operators," says Thurman Bush, J.C. Bradford project leader. And Bush says VRS offers scanner management benefits beyond better images. "For example, if you have a paper jam, you don't have to rescan the entire batch. VRS stops the scanner and you can reload the jammed page and restart where you left off," he says.

Both Ascent Capture Internet Server and VRS installed just as easily as they have worked. "We've had very few problems and it only takes 15 to 20 minutes to train operators," Bookout says.

Remote ACIS sites can be installed quickly through Microsoft Internet Explorer on the remote client computer. On the server side,

administrators may configure remote client capabilities from simple scanning to sophisticated automated indexing and can also set automatic or manual document batch synchronization from all sites for the Nashville server.

Bradford & Company indexes all documents at the central site rather than the branch offices. This keeps everything as simple as possible for the branches, which permits them to focus on sales and customer service.

ACI Server has solved the lost document problem. When remote offices scan documents, they get an e-mail acknowledging their receipt at headquarters. The documents are then indexed and released to an ADP back end. At that point, anyone authorized - local or remote - may access the electronic document repository. Of course, they are also immediately available during surprise SEC or stock exchange visits.

Now that documents are captured and electronically indexed, electronic workflow has begun. Interoffice envelopes have disappeared from the new account process. And documents may be traced, referenced and retrieved throughout the process.

The ultimate endorsement: Bookout plans to expand the system to anything that now goes in an envelope, including accounts payable, compliance and human resources.

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